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THE
COMPLETION
OF THE
SPIRE
AND
OTHER
POEMS.

by
Edward Owings Towne.

APHORISMS OF THE THREE THREES.

By EDWARD OWINGS TOWNE.

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THE
Completion of the Spire
AND
OTHER POEMS

BY
EDWARD OWINGS TOWNE

CHICAGO
MID-CONTINENT PUBLISHING Co
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BY EDWARD OWINGS TOWNE.

The Completion of the Spire

THE COMPLETION OF THE SPIRE.

A MIGHTY throng of people filled the streets,
Ten thousand eyes upon the new-built spire
Were fixed. Graceful and fair it rose
Above the massive portals and arched entrances
Of Copenhagen's far-famed kirk,
A marvel of construction and of beauty.
But a few strokes were to be added
And the life-long dream of Hans the builder,
Finished, would forever live in stone.
But now upon the eve of the eventful hour,
The heart of Hans the builder is sad,
For in all the progress of the work,
And daily laying of stone on stone,
And constant lifting of beams to dizzy heights,
Not one drop of blood had sealed the work,
Not one expiring soul had left its legacy
Of immortality to the builder's skill.
And to every master builder it was known,
That no spire or tower or monument ever built
Could last without the seal of blood.

A human life must be the cost
Of an enduring pile of stone.
So in the summer afternoon
As Hans the master builder
Mounted the steps to the belfry tower,
His lips were tightly pressed together,
And his eyes rolled gloomily beneath his frown-
ing brows.

At the foot of the last ladder he came upon
Three apprentices stripping from their work.
“Well, master,” said one, “our work is finished.”
“No, Carl,” the master said, “it is *not* finished;
“One thing remains, but it must be a brave man
to do it.”

“Well, master, for that man you have not far to
look,”

The apprentice answered; “I will do it.
“There is no steadier head in Copenhagen than
mine.”

A quick look shot from beneath the master’s
shaggy brows.

“Thou art a boaster,” said he, “mine is
steadier.”

“Nay, master, not even thine,” the other
answered,

“Then, child, make good thy boast,

“Bring back my hatchet from where I place it,”
Said the master,
And without another word,
He leaped upon a ledge
Over which a banner beam extended
Forty feet into the clear air.
Upon this beam, running out, the master,
Agile, sure-footed, strong and possessed
Of a courage that age could not abate,
Sunk the hatchet to the very helve into its end:
A moment later he stood again upon the ledge,
And calmly said, “Bring back my hatchet, son.”
And beneath his breath he muttered—
“The spire is not yet finished.”

The apprentice stood appalled. His master's deed
Had filled even his stout heart with horror.
But summoning up his courage, smiling faintly,
He stepped upon the ledge.
In the western sky the sun was half way down.
The narrow streets were filled with people.
As he stepped upon the beam he could hear
Their distant roar sink into silence.
At first he moved out briskly,
Then a thought of Matilda, the builder's daughter,
Crossed his mind.

His step became slower.
The beam quivered and bent beneath his weight.
In spite of himself he hesitated, when to hesitate
He knew was death.
There was a pressure upon his chest.
He stifled a sob.
He approached the beam's end.
His head began to reel.
Now to seize the hatchet!
As he looked upon it, to his horror,
Instead of one were two! He saw double!
"Master," said he, "Master, which one shall I
bring?"
The master quickly crossed himself.
"Master, master, which one? Which one?
"Jesu pity, I can not find it!"
He slowly straightened up. An instant
He covered his eyes with his hands,
Then reeling slightly, with arms extended fell.
"May God have mercy on his soul!
"The spire is finished,"
Said Hans the master builder.

LEGEND OF THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

OH! never, I ween, on earth was seen,
A lady more lovely and bright;
And never before on the Itchen's shore
Was there ever so gallant a knight.

They sat by the side of the mirroring tide,
They counted the stars in the stream;
The night was but day, with a star-softened ray,
Their love was the love of a dream.

As sweet was the vow to the lady, I trow,
As ever by true knight was given;
He swore by the skies, by the lady's blue eyes,
And everything true under heaven.

Then down the blue river, that floweth forever,
There floated a chaplet of flowers;
Said the lady bright to the gallant Knight,
"O, would that the chaplet were ours—"

No sooner the word by the lover was heard,
Than into the flood plunged he,
And gallant and brave, he breasted the wave,
That onward swept to the sea.

The blossoms he seized and turned well pleased,
To swim with his prize to the shore;
The current was strong as it rushed along,
And his armor weighted him sore.

But he gathered his strength and swam till at
length,
He had almost reached the bank,
When his heart misgave, and under the wave
Before her eyes he sank.

Twice did he rise, with distraught eyes,
Most pitiful to see;
Twice did he sink, (Oh, heaven! to think,)
In terrible agony.

At last once again, (but the struggle was vain,)
He rose to the pitying air,
His lady's face white in piteous affright,
He saw in his last despair.

The dripping flowers sweet he threw at her feet—
The flowers his life had bought—
And cried in his pain, as he sank again,
“Thy flowers—forget me not.”

And true to her knight, the lady bright
Her life long mourned her lot;
And to this hour, her true love's flower
Is called—Forget-Me-Not.

THE CASTLE BY THE SEA.

From the German of Uhland.

HAVE you beheld the castle,
The castle by the sea?
Rosy and golden with sunlight,
Did the clouds float over thee?

Ah! fain! ah! fain! would the castle
Bow down to the mirroring stream!
Ah! fain! would it rise to a crowning
Of flame, in the eventide's beam.

“Indeed, have I beheld it,
The castle by the sea,
The moon above it shining,
The mist all silvery!”

The winds, the waves of ocean,
Gave they a joyous sound?
Heard you the lofty towers
With festal song resound?

“The winds, the waves were silent,
The winds, the waves all slept;
A dirge from out the castle,
I heard and hearing wept.”

Saw you a king and consort,
The marble steps come down?
Saw you red mantles waving,
And the flash of a golden crown?

Beheld you not with wonder,
A lovely young girl there,
(A vision like an angel!)
With glorious golden hair?

“Indeed, I saw both parents,
But not the flashing crown,
I saw dark mourning garments,
But young girl saw I none.”

FLEMISH SONG.

I KNOW a song so dear to me,
A song of wondrous melody,
A simple song which stirs my heart
Beyond the studied powers of art;
It is a song my mother sang,
Deep from her loving heart it sprang,
She sang it to her cradle joy,
Her darling child, her first-born boy.
Oh! mother song! Oh! mother love!
My heart to tears ye move.

I know a song so dear to me,
A song of wondrous melody,
A simple song which stirs my heart
Beyond the studied powers of art;
It is a song a loved one sung
When love and life and hope were young,
When skies and fields and flowers and grove
Smiled on our happy wedded love.
Oh! youth! Oh! love! Oh! summer's day!
How soon ye fleet away!

I know a song so dear to me,
A song of wondrous melody,
 A simple song which stirs my heart,
 Beyond the studied powers of art;
But no one sings that song of old,
The lips that sang it once are cold,
 And though so sweet in by gone-years,
 Its memory fills my eyes with tears.
Oh! age! Oh! life! Oh! winter's day!
Ye, too, will pass away!

WHEN FIRST I SAW THEE.

WHEN first I saw thee,
As a wild thing might,—
Betrayed and faced and caught
By the hunter,
Dazed, confused, confounded,
I became thy captive.

* * * * *

Ah spare me, sweet! or rather spare me not!
Kill me—kill me with love!

Ah, yes! ——***

When first I saw thee
As a dove,
With broken wing,
So fond—alas!
So dazed, so lost,
I fluttered to thy hand——***

* * * * *

What! Are you so cruel? Must I leave you now?
Nay! Nay! You command? Well, kiss me then,
And I will go—
No! No! Not once! Not once!—one kiss? one kiss?
A million were too little,
A thousand, pitiful,
One—death!

PERFECTION.

“**A** MARYLLIS I did woo,
And I courted Phillis too;
Daphne for her love I chose,
Chloris for the damask rose
In her cheek I held most dear.”
Nina’s hand once drew me near,
Fairer than a dream, I thought,
Celia for her lips I sought,
Nora for her soft brown eyes,
And the soul that in them lies,
Cora for her wealth of hair,
Pallas for her form and air;
Many ladies have I woo’d,
For cheek, for lip, for hand have sued:
Now in thee all these I find,
Chloris’ cheek and Nora’s mind,
Celia’s lips and Cora’s hair,
All adorn thee, gentle fair:
Phillis’ soul and Pallas’ grace,
Breathe their beauties o’er thy face,
Daphne’s heart is in thy breast,
Amaryllis gives the rest.

INSANITY.

H! Why do you come thus dabbled in blood?
Yet welcome, dark angel, to thee;
Ha! Hast thou brought from the Lethean flood
The drink thou hast promised to me?

Yes? Pour, pour it forth into this golden cup,
Fill, fill it now to the brim.
Now lady, *sweet* lady, now drink, drink it up,
And drown—drown—all memories of *him*.

Gone? Oh! God! Gone? Black, black is the
night,
Blood! Blood! Blood drops from the skies!
See!—There!—in a shroud of pure white,
See! See! His body—*there*—lies—

My darling! Why,—darling!—Your lips are all
cold!
Come, dearest, 'tis Lena, the one you would
wed;
My loved one! my life! my treasure untold!
Great God! Oh! My God! he is dead!

DALPHINE.

THROW myself upon my couch,
And sob the weary night;
The morning smiles upon the woe,
It can not render light.

I walk upon the streamlet's bank—
My soul delights in shade—
With the heaviest heart that ever sank
Within the breast of maid.

A bird sings from the arch above,
With pitying notes to me;
“O, never let thy sorrow dwell
Beyond the night with thee.”

I smile upon the witless thing,
And speak in terms as brief;
“The one that knows not woman's love,
Can never know her grief.”

WAR.

THE babe is in the cradle,
Sweet sleep its eyes has sealed;
Beside the crib the mother
Before her God has kneeled.

Unto her God the mother
Prays with lips that burn,—
Prays that God will grant
The father's safe return.

Under a freezing sky,
While the mother prayeth low,
The life blood of the father
Reddens the falling snow.

The babe is in the cradle,
The mother on her knees,
The father lieth on the field,
Done with victories.

COQUETTE.

COQUETTE, Coquette, I, thy pet,
For a day, for a day,—
How you smile as I fret,
Saying yes and then nay,
Saying carelessly yes and indifferently nay,
Coquette, Coquette, sweet Coquette.

Coquette, Coquette, I regret
That you smiled on the day,
When we met, when we met,
Saying yes and then nay,
Saying charmingly yes and provokingly nay,
Coquette, Coquette, sweet Coquette.

Coquette, Coquette, in thy net
I can say, I can say,
That the world's hope is set
In a girl's yes or nay,
In a girl's simple yes or a girl's simple nay,
Coquette, Coquette, sweet Coquette.

VEIL, O, VEIL THOSE LOVELY EYES.

VEIL, O, veil those lovely eyes,
And hide, O, hide thy face,
And let my breaking heart forget
Thy loveliness and grace.

Bind again thy falling hair,
And take thy lips from mine,
And let me teach my own to know
They may not feed on thine.

Love, O, Love! why art thou dear,
When sighs and tears can tell
So little of the agony
Of love's—of love's—farewell?

THE ROSEBUD.

A ROSEBUD sweet and timid,
In a pretty garden grew,
It was just too late for sunshine,
Just too early for the dew.

“Do you love me, Aimie, Aimie?
Do you love me, love me? True?”
Can I e'er forget her answer?
“Love you? Yes—love only you.”

And the little flower garden,
Where the pretty rosebud grew,
Seemed to me a kind of heaven,
Made for just us two.

O, DEEM ME NOT INCONSTANT.

DEEM me not inconstant,
O, deem me not untrue,
The more I know of others' hearts,
The more mine turns to you.

O, deem me not inconstant,
O, deem me not untrue,
The more I gaze in others' eyes,
The more I see in you.

O, deem me not inconstant,
O, deem me not untrue,
Each fault I find in others, sweet,
A new charm adds to you.

THE BROKEN HEART.

THE FLOWER that rudely from its stem
is torn
Does not upon the instant fade and die,
But with an innocence that pity moves
Opens within the spoiler's hand its glowing heart,
And still unstinted yields its sweet perfume.
So hearts that break may still beat on,
Nor eyes lack lustre when they smile,
The mantling cheek still, still may glow,
The sunlight still may dance upon the hair,
But like the flower 'tis but an hour—a day,
The sun sets shining on its growing loveliness,
The morning breaks upon its withered leaves.

THE BROOKLET.

D THOU brooklet, thoughtless tide,
Giddy, dancing, rushing by,
Could you know
The thoughts you bring
 To me, as I lie
With my head upon my hands,
Would you still be hurrying?

O, thou brooklet, fickle one,
 Bubbling, smiling, whirling by,
So like—so like—
One that I knew,
O, the thoughts you bring
 To me—as I lie
With my head upon my hands,—
Ah! Ah! How the brook, the brook is
 hurrying!

SPEED, SPEED, GOOD STEED.

SPEED, speed, good steed; the late moon sheds
Its beams with warning splendor;
A sweet, bright face of haunting grace,
With eyes full dark and tender
Is sad with waiting for me.

Haste thee, good steed! haste thee! oh, haste!
Oh! fast and faster bear me!
For by my God, the spur and rod
I can not, will not spare thee,
While that sweet face and those dear eyes
Are sad with waiting for me.

A LOVER TO A STAR.

BEAUTIFUL, beautiful, radiant and bright,
Lovely, ah! loveliest, star of the night;
Lovelight of heaven, shining afar,
O, thou art purity, beautiful star.

Star brightly shining, shining above,
As long as you shone, we swore we would love;
That vow she has broken — yet — gem of the sky.
I love her alone and will, loving her, die.

AH! BUT TO BREATHE AGAIN.

AH! BUT to breathe again
In the world of thy charms;
Ah! But to dream again
In the heaven of thy arm.

Ah! But to live again
The old days of bliss;
Ah! But to know again
What is past and yet still is.

RAISE AGAIN THE DROOPING HEAD.

RAISE again the drooping head,
When friendship's hope is gone,
But who will lift the fallen crown
Of love's mourning one?

Raise again the drooping head,
When friends are gone forever,
But the pulse love's parting slows,
Quickens again, ah! never!

LANDSCAPE.

ONCE above us stood a cottage,
Looking downward o'er the vale,
Once within yon grove a maiden
Listened to a lover's tale.

Now the cottage is in ruins,
And beneath the elm tree's shade,
Lie the broken hearted parents
Of a love-lost, ruined maid.

WERE I A KING.

WERE I a king, were I a king,
And fighting for my crown,
What wounds, what wounds with joy I'd take,
With honor smiling on!

Were I a knight, were I a knight,
In lists my truth to prove,
How gladly life itself I'd give
For one tear of love.

I HOLD IN MY HAND A BOOK.

I HOLD in my hand a book,
In the book is written a name;
Tears start to my eyes as I look,
My cheek burns as a flame.

Oh! That love is so blind!
Oh! that love is so dear!
Oh! that a secret should bind
To silence forever my tear!

MORNING.

THE early morning sun has filled the fields,
My dog bounds gaily by my side,
The turtle flies with whistling wings,
The cattle nip the moistened grass with eager
haste,
The world is filled — *is filled* with glory,
A new created, strange, intoxicating glory,
Not possible without last night — and *you*.

OH! NEVER YET.

HI! never yet
The morning drank
The gathered dews
That in her haste
The night had left,
But that
Ere she came back,
To fill again
Her flowery cups,
Some maiden's heart
Went thrilling
To the deep
Wild music
Of first love.

SONG.

NO kisses were like mine,
Like mine, like mine,
Like mine, he said;
No other lips were half so dear,
So dear, so dear;
And yet for this full year,
To another he's been wed,
Been wed, been wed,
To another he's been wed.

WHAT SHALL A MAIDEN DO?

WHAT shall a maiden do
When love says, come,
But duty bids her stay?
What shall she do?
What shall she say?
Ah! what can a maiden do,
When love says, come?

WHEN FAR FROM THEE.

WHEN far from thee,
Could I but know
You thought of me,
That once
(Even in a dream,)
You thought of me
My exile
Would less bitter be,
My weary exile
Would less bitter be.

A HAPPY DEATH.

From the German.

LIFELESS, stricken
By her charms,
I lie buried
In her arms;
Kisses wake me,
I uprise,
And see heaven
In her eyes.

THE BEGGAR LOVE.

THE beggar love,
At the heart's closed portals,
Sues with sighs
And humble prayer,
But once within,—
The cunning rascal
Is instant master there.

THE BUBBLE LOVE.

THOU bubble love, stay, stay!
I quickly follow—overtake it—
Have I caught thee, love? Nay! Nay!
To catch a bubble is to break it.

Madrigals

I.

WHAT is beauty?
'Tis not known
Where my darling
Is not seen.

What is fortune?
'Tis to reign
In my darling's heart
A king.

II.

SWEET ROSES in her garden grow,
Roses and lilies fair;
Her only jewels are
The dew drops hanging there.

III.

SHE IS beautiful,
She is beautiful—
As a star risen from the sea,
But I love her less, I love her less,
For her beauty
Than for her purity.

IV.

AS A ROSE her mouth,
As two stars her eyes,
And her gentle voice,
Sounds from paradise.

As a rose her mouth,
As two stars her eyes,
Ah! what without my sweet
To me were paradise!

V.

A MILLION stars,
Are kind above,
But cruel, cruel
 Is my love;
A perfect moon
Bestows her light,
My love would leave me
 To the night;
Strange, that stars
And moon should stay,
And love, love only,
 Run away!

VI.

STAY, THOU art so fair,
Why leave me to despair?
 When you are gone
 The night is cold,
 The grass is damp,
 The flowers are wet,
Stay, my darling,
 Stay a moment yet!

VII.

THE MOUNTAIN has a flower,
Not to be bought with gold;
The mountain has a treasure,
The city does not hold.

That flower, that priceless flower,
My darling one thou art,
That treasure, when I clasp thee,
I hold upon my heart.

VIII.

IF I WERE a little bird,
Flitting through the sky,
Can you tell me, can you tell me,
Whither I would fly?

Through the summer morning's purple,
Through the summer morning's dew,
I would fly, thou little maiden,
On my swiftest wing to you.

IX.

THE HEART that love has never known
Is like a wayside flower,
That all unpitied, withered, dies
In an unheeded hour.

The heart that love has never known
Is but a useless frame,
Unfilled by love's bright images,
'Tis but a heart in name.



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